

THE TRUE DEMOCRAT

JOHN G. COLLINS, Proprietor.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY MORNING.

THE INSANE HOSPITAL.

State Press Opinions on the Investigating Committee's Report.

Never has a committee report received more commendation for fearlessness and integrity of purpose than that of the legislative committee appointed to visit, inspect and report on the condition of the State hospital for the insane. The report, as submitted to the Senate by the Hon. W. K. Jackson, who was the member from that body on the committee, is an example of fearlessness, exhaustive labor, and almost intuitive ability to grasp all essential points, that will, or should, forever establish a precedent in future Florida Legislatures. It is a report and an indictment in one. To Senator Jackson, and to the other members of the committee, are due the thanks of the people of the State of Florida. Promises come to us that searching investigation and action, both on the part of the Legislature and on the part of the courts, will make this report at least of resultant value.—Gainesville Sun.

All Florida feels ashamed at the awful revelation of the practices and doings at this place, but there is this consolation, that it is never too late to mend, and that Governor Broward and the Legislature can surely be depended on to do their duty, no matter what the consequences may be, and regardless of who may suffer. The report states that the asylum seems to have been made the dumping ground for sick and superfluous people, who could not be otherwise disposed of. The committee goes into details on this subject, and enumerates some facts which seem almost incredible unless vouched for by a committee of such conservative men as those on the committee. Another terrible feature of the report is the fact that it directly charges mistreatment of the patients incarcerated therein, and intimates, in no uncertain language, that deaths have resulted from cruelty practiced upon the unfortunates in the asylum. The nurses are declared to be a drunken and carousing set, with no care for the patients and little thought of the responsibilities devolving upon them in the care of the people placed under their charge. The funds appropriated for the maintenance have been wasted, for which it is certain that someone is to be held responsible. The sanitary arrangements are also characterized as worthless. In the face of these facts there is only one thing to do. Make a thorough housecleaning from cellar to garret. Remove the cause of a blight that is worse than death. No use to repine or bewail. Now is the time to act.—St. Augustine Record.

If conditions at the State insane asylum were only a small part as bad as they are represented in the report of the investigating committee, a synopsis of which was published in the Journal yesterday morning, they would still be too horrible almost for contemplation. If, as the report alleges, the conduct of the asylum has been attended by misappropriation of funds, immorality and vice on the part of the attendants, and cruel and inhuman treatment of the inmates, the case will form a chapter of high crime unparalleled in the history of this or any other State. The unfortunates whom it is necessary to commit to an insane asylum should be objects of the State's most solicitous consideration. They are the bearers of a heavier burden of misfortune than any other class with whom we have to deal. Their very helplessness and hopelessness appeal to the tenderest side of every man's sympathies and of the whole world's humanity. But to think that where every generous impulse, every appeal to charity, every sentiment of humanity—to think that where all these combine with every consideration of official duty—there should be found a condition of affairs which can hardly be detailed in print—it brings the blush of shame to the cheek of everyone who possesses even the remotest trace of the sensibilities of life and duty. A few days ago the Journal expressed the hope that the condition of affairs at the asylum would be probed to the bottom. It now expresses the hope that every man who is even remotely responsible for the condition which the committee's report alleges will be punished to the full extent of the law. Let the investigation proceed; let the law take its full course, and let no guilty man escape.—Pensacola Journal.

Allowing all reasonable discounts for the personal and political equation in the State printing and the asylum for the insane, as these subjects have been presented to the Legislature, there is undoubtedly ample ground for a full and complete investigation. It is much to be regretted that the matters were not brought to the attention of the body earlier in the session when there would have been plenty of time to have investigated them and published the testimony.

As to the asylum charges they are the same that have been everywhere and always made, and they must be verified by actual and absolute proof before they can be accepted and acted upon. As concerns the State printing, that is self-evidently defective and discreditable thing. Nothing has been issued from the so-called State press for years but is ample evidence to convict the management of incompetency and mismanagement and injury to the reputation of the State. There is no doubt whatever that there should be a radical change and an improvement in that department. As to the actual charges of dishonesty in its administration, they

must be proved and established by actual and competent testimony. Whether or not these charges are true and can be sustained, the State has suffered enough and long enough from the utter incompetence and ignorance of the man who has been doing its printing. It has been and is a positive disgrace. Misspelled words, unpunctuated paragraphs, names printed wrong, the utter absence of style, in fact the whole catalogue of possible butchering and botching, have characterized the production of every State document for years. It should be put an immediate end to—politics or no politics, corruption or no corruption. It is to be hoped the Legislature will close up both these matters in the time that is left to it. To allow them to go over as "unfinished political business", as capital in the next campaign, would be injudicious. The alleged wrong-doers could plead that the original design was to discredit them and nothing else, that the charges are baseless and invented merely for political effect. And this view of the case would be widely believed. Therefore the matters should be brought to an emphatic and complete conclusion by the present Legislature at this session. If crimes have been committed against the State or the innocent insane, they should be discovered and punished. If not, the accused should be exculpated. We ought not to be subject to three years of acrimonious recrimination, denials, hard feelings and general demoralization, which will be the case if these important matters are left in the air until the next session of the Legislature. Let's have it over and done with, in the interest of peace and progress.—Tampa Times.

In bringing up his resolution relating to printing Supreme Court reports in the Senate, Senator Harris created a sensation by referring to rumors that members of the Board of State Institutions were stockholders in the present State printing concern. He described the contract for printing these reports as "rotten from top to bottom," and referred to the possibility of instituting impeachment proceedings in the House. The Florida Legislature needs more men like Senator Harris, who are not afraid to speak out, and who are in favor of investigating rumors.—Gainesville Star.

Such a prodigious number of bills have been introduced during the present session of the Legislature, and they are in so many confusing stages of activity and inactivity, as reported from day to day, that no mortal man outside the Capitol can keep track of all of them. Our big dailies do their best, and all that can be expected of them, but when the Legislature adjourns very few people will know just what laws have been passed. And yet ignorance of the law excuses no man who transgresses it—a sound maxim, necessary for good government; but the legal presumption that we all know the law after the Legislature gets through creating, repealing and tinkering, is a very violent one.—Live Oak Democrat.

KNOCKING JENNINGS.
The Daily Capital rushes to the rescue of the insane asylum officials. When we consider that Hilson's greatness and the Capital's existence are lamentable fragments of the Jennings administration, there is no wonder at the bond of sympathy.—Perry Topics.

Over \$60,000 paid out for special counsel to do the work that should have been done by the Attorney-General! Think of that, all ye who applaud the alleged "business administration." * * * If the Legislature should pass the bill prohibiting the employment of special counsel in the future, Barrs, Wolfe, Liddon, Jennings, et al., will have to work up some new scheme to feed at the public trough.—Lake City Index.

It begins to look now as if The Record will not have to tell the people the whole story about how a man can go into the governor's office broke, serve four years at a salary of \$3,500 per year, spend \$4,000, and come out of the office in shape to take a nice slice of stock in a million dollar bank. However, we didn't look for any evidence from the insane asylum. That model administration seems to melt before the noonday sun.—Manatee Record.

The report of the legislative committee appointed to investigate the condition of asylum for the insane at Chattahoochee is one which calls for universal condemnation of the methods employed by the managers of that institution. Drunkenness, cruelty to patients, neglect of duty and various other damnable features were reported, and the asylum officials seem to have had no regard whatever for the poor unfortunate human sufferers in their charge. Those who persist in declaring Jennings the best governor Florida has ever had can now give him another mark of merit, as the superintendent of the asylum was one of his Brooksville pets. Just keep tab on the movements of the Jennings administration as they develop and we imagine those who were loudest in praise will censure the most bitterly.—Perry Topics.

The charges which follow are not the sensational utterances of yellow journalism, but the calm and unmistakable findings of the State legislative committee appointed to visit and report on the condition of the State insane asylum at Chattahoochee.

The report shows a condition of affairs in that institution which constitutes at once the most blighting disgrace which has come upon the State of Florida in all its sixty years of history. A disgrace that will strike deeply and bring the blush of shame to every citizen.

The conditions are solely due to the incompetent administration of Governor Jennings. He it was who turned out the experienced and humane Trammell

and gave over the management of the asylum to one to whom he was under social obligations. He it was who turned out Dr. Blocker, one of the greatest alienists in the south, and placed the care of our insane in the hands of an incompetent country doctor, with the result that after four years our insane asylum has been changed from an institution for the intelligent and kindly treatment of our unfortunates to such a place as is described here by the legislative committee.—Palatka News.

It is coming more and more into the open that things at Tallahassee during the Jennings administration got to be just about as rotten as they could be and held together. Not the most striking instance of this is the report of the committee that visited the State asylum for the insane, which says that things there are and have been in horrible condition, although being improved as fast as possible by the new superintendent. The committee, in one part of its report, says that it cannot publish all the evidence secured for the reason that it is unfit to print. It will be remembered that there were some not very complimentary rumors afloat a few years ago in reference to things there, but friends of the administration who investigated applied the whitewash brush with such good effect that it was hushed up. Just on top of this came the resolution of Senator Harris that called for an investigation of the rumors that State officials were stockholders in the company having the contract for the State printing, and there may be others.—DeFuniak Breeze.

So horrible is the condition said to be at the asylum for the insane at Chattahoochee, and has existed for a long time under the late Governor Jennings, that the grand jury of that county has been called together to investigate the matter and return indictments against those responsible for this shameful condition. The legislative committee unearthed this rottenness at Chattahoochee, and if half what it says in its report is true the parties responsible for such condition should be sent to the penitentiary. We say, if the half is true, it is an infamous disgrace upon the fair name of Florida, and certainly Governor Jennings and the members of the Board of State Institutions must have known that such condition existed, and if they did know, they too are responsible.

This is a terrible condition, if true, to exist in a State and among civilized people.

If this deplorable condition really exists there, Governor Broward should at once rid the institute of it, kick the guilty officials out, have them prosecuted and sent to the penitentiary. And he will do it.

We believe that Governor Broward will permit not even the talk of a scandal or rottenness in any State department while he is the State's chief executive.—DeLand Record.

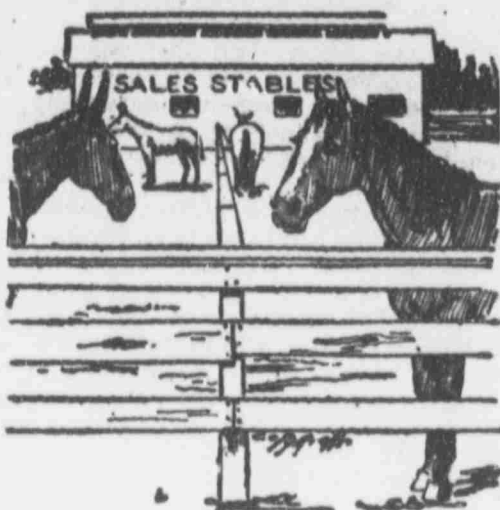
That asylum scandal has been pending a long time and now since a start has been made to uncover it it should be probed to the very bottom and everyone in the slightest degree connected with it held up to public scorn and contempt. But will it be so? The "graft" malady seems to have struck even the high places in Florida.—Madison New Enterprise.

Dr. Gwynn, former superintendent of the State Insane Asylum, has asked the legislature to investigate fully the charges that the asylum under his care was improperly and disgracefully managed and conducted. After the statements of the various authorities that it was, it would appear that Dr. Gwynn had better let this matter drop and die the easiest death possible. The stench, no doubt, would be greater with two parties instead of one, stirring up the filth.—Miami Metropolis.

Referring to the recent legislative report on the condition at the State hospital, Attorney General W. H. Ellis has the enviable opportunity of saying to the other members of the Board of Public Institutions "I told you so," as it was he who insisted on a general investigation some three months ago when the board was considering the matter of asking Doctors Gwynn and Christie to resign. Had the board made the investigation at that time and acted accordingly, it would have, not only done what was right, but would have received the well merited commendation of the public instead of its untimely censure as it is now receiving, on account of neglecting its duty and leaving the work that it should have performed for the legislative committee.—Quincy Herald and Era.

Never has committee work received more commendation for fearlessness and integrity of purpose than that of the legislative committee appointed to visit, inspect and report on the condition of the State hospital for the insane. The report as submitted to the Senate by the Hon. W. K. Jackson, who was the member of that body on the committee, is an example of fearlessness, exhaustive labor and almost intuitive ability to grasp all essential points that will, or should, forever establish a precedent in future Florida legislatures. It is a report and indictment in one. To Senator Jackson and to the other members of the committee are due the thanks of the people of the State of Florida. Promises come to us that searching investigation and action, both on the part of the Legislature and on the part of the courts, will make this one report, at least, of resultant value.—Ocala Banner.

The Pensacola Journal states that Representative Avery, of Escambia, will ever be looked upon with favor by the members of the State press for having introduced the new libel law, but it fails to say just how Dr. Julian, of Columbia, will be regarded for having had the bill indefinitely postponed. Almost anyone could guess, though.—Quincy Times.



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